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WRITTEN REPLY

(1) According to a written opinion produced by the International Search Authority, the inventions described in Claims 1, 3 to 5, and 7 to 11 have been judged to bring about no inventive step on the basis of the document 1 (JP 07-200380 A) and the document 2 (JP 2002-290974 A) referenced in the International Search Report.

Furthermore, the inventions described in Claims 2, 6, and 12 have been judged to bring about no inventive step on the basis of the documents 1 and 2 and the document 3 (JP 11-355756 A) referenced in the International Search Report.

On the other hand, Claims have been amended in order to clarify differences from the cited reference documents. Therefore, the amendments will be described hereafter.

(2) Claims after the amendments have a feature that the candidate program head data group previously retained in the storage by the receiving terminal is a part of all programs and it is a set of programs that might be reproduced arbitrarily at a single opportunity. The program group that can be reproduced arbitrarily at a single opportunity means a program group selected by the user on the basis of a result of retrieval or the like and the user's taste, a program group specified by a community to which the user belongs, or a program group restricted to a specific time range or channel (paragraph [0026]).

Furthermore, in diversified viewing environments and increasing programs, features of viewing forms of users considered in the present invention are as follows: (paragraphs [0004] and [0005])

1. Before actually conducting viewing, processing for selecting candidate programs that might be reproduced consecutively at one viewing

opportunity is conducted by a viewer.

2. This selection processing and actual program viewing are not necessarily conducted consecutively.

3. After the viewer has selected the candidate once, the viewer desires that reproduction without delay will be conducted in any reproduction environment for the candidate program group.

In accordance with the present invention, pre-reading processing is conducted asynchronously with actual viewing, at the time when candidate programs are selected. In other words, the above-described features of the viewing form which cannot be satisfied by the conventional information delivery system are implemented by associating pre-processing for viewing, i.e., selection of candidate programs with the pre-reading processing which is the conventional art (paragraph [0026]).

In other words, pre-reading of head data to be retained by the receiving terminal is conducted efficiently and rationally by associating the selection of the candidate programs conducted as pre-processing with the pre-reading processing. In other words, pre-reading processing optimum for implementing the above-described viewing form is conducted.

On the other hand, all documents referenced in the International Search Report describe techniques for implementing consecutive reproduction between programs in a single or an arbitrary reproduction environment. These techniques can be regarded as techniques similar to the present invention in that head data are prepared with respect to a plurality of programs.

However, the techniques alone described in the referenced documents cannot bring about the effect of optimum pre-reading processing for a single viewing request (for example, retrieval using the web). In the

techniques described in referenced documents, the service form in which the subject of application is a single program and the user views randomly on the basis of a retrieval result is not taken into consideration, unlike the present invention.

(3) As heretofore described, the present invention implementing features in a new viewing environment is considered to bring about inventive step.